2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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absorb the appeals to ancestors. This is only another aspect of their lack of a special 'domain'. And even where *kuci* worship does not lose its independence so completely, it yet has little autonomy; for the kind of supernatural aid it promises can equally be procured by other forms of worship or sacrifice. But of this, too, we shall speak later.

Let me conclude the present account with the brief mention of a further ambiguous practice, a form of sacrifice which stands halfway between an appeal to *Sokó* and the appeal to *kuci*. It is performed by families in which there are or have been twins and is known by that name, *bakomba*. Such houses will possess a special shrine, consisting of a number of small earthenware pots built into the outside wall of a hut, which the women will regularly fill with beer and porridge. Once a year, on the birthday of the twins, the family head will bring a sacrifice of beer and blood of fowl. Now, twins are lucky and a sign of divine benevolence; equally, they represent a special incarnation, a concentration as it were of the 'kinship soul'. In this sacrifice, then, one addresses *Sokó* as well as (an anonymous) *kuci*; and the people who have such a twin shrine will perform all their sacrifices to *kuci* there, and not over the grave of an individual ancestor.

(v) *Spirit Beings*

In the preceding discussion we touched upon certain beliefs in spirits—in 'ancestral spirits', which are an aspect of the personal soul, and in 'ghosts', which are transmutations of the shadow soul. But when the Nupe mention 'spirits' among the things that make up the world they do not mean either of these; they mean immaterial beings which exist in their own right and are not derived from humans, although they have some quasi-human attributes and inhabit the same earth. It is possible that this belief is not an original tenet of Nupe creed; for the Nupe call these spirit beings by a Hausa–Arabic name, *aljénu* (pl. *aljenúži*), and may well have borrowed certain of their aspects from Islam. However this may be, the Nupe do not regard this belief as in any way alien or 'borrowed'. And whether the name for spirits is Nupe or Arabic, it is a name, sharply distinguishing this class of beings from all others.

Though circumstantial and readily expressed, the spirit beliefs are fluid and far from uniform. The most varied opinions will not be thought unorthodox, but will be taken as evidence for the multifariousness of the spirit world. A first group of spirits, vaguely anthropomorphous but without distinct individualities, is said to inhabit the inanimate parts of nature, hills, trees, watercourses, the bush, and so forth. These spirits have sex, and according to

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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a new priest is born, the village must temporarily cease to perform the ritual altogether and join instead in the celebrations of a neighbouring, more fortunate, locality.

The *gunnu* priest is also in other ways elevated above common mortals. In everyday life there is little to distinguish the *Žigí* or *Ndazo* from the average Nupe peasant. The only visible distinction lies in their manner of dress; for the two priests may only wear a loincloth and a piece of cloth slung across the shoulder, never the more elaborate flowing gown and trousers of Nupe, and must always walk bareheaded. Both the simple dress and the uncovered head are also obligatory for anyone attending the rituals in question (and indeed most rituals), so that the priests are as it were always 'on duty' and constantly display their association with things sacred. In the case of the *Ndazo*, his very life is sacred: he is inviolable, and no one may lay hands on him, even if he committed some serious offence. Also, when the *Ndazo* dies, the usual funerary rites are replaced by a performance of the *gunnu*. Concerning the priestly dress, the usual explanation is that the *Žigí* and *Ndazo* must not wear anything 'tied round the waist' (as they would if they wore trousers); but the people do not speculate further, and the *Ndazo's* birth-mark is taken to mean simply something that is rare and lucky, and attaches to the most vital part of the body, the head. Characteristically, another lucky birth-mark, once more on the head, is linguistically associated with the *gunnu*: children born in a caul are called *Ndagunnu*, 'Father *gunnu*'.

Of the three fixed rituals of Doko the *gunnu* is undoubtedly the most important, representing the peak of ceremonial life and being thought of as harbouring the strongest force of *kuti*. Equally, it is the only ritual bearing so conspicuously the stamp of the miraculous. Somewhat surprisingly, the greater importance of the *gunnu* has not helped to protect it from the impact of cultural change. On the contrary, the *gunnu* is usually the first ritual to disappear or at least to lose its character of a 'fixed' ritual, surviving only as an occasional, 'movable' ceremony. Now several of the villages which abandoned the *gunnu* altogether did so when their 'born' *Ndazo* died or the family of hereditary priests became extinct. Whatever other influences may have tended to weaken the hold of the *gunnu* ritual, the difficulty of finding a successor to this unique priestship must have hastened the process; so that the link with the miraculous, as it helped to raise the cult above all others, also made it more vulnerable.

(ii) *Movable Rituals*

These are quickly described; for they are simple and business-like, devoid both of elaborate proceedings and complicated

CULTURAL FEATURES AND THE LIFE CYCLE

Physical Characteristics: Tribal Marks: Dress

142 While the aboriginal Nupe sub-tribes (Ebe, Beni, Ebagi, and Bataci) are negro in appearance, there are indications of considerable non-negro elements in their ancestry. A striking type with oval face, high cheekbones, and slightly mongoloid eyes is often found among those of mixed Fulani descent.

181 The Nupe are known all over Nigeria as an industrious and formerly warlike people. They are progressive and anxious to try new methods, e.g., in agriculture. The women are keen and successful traders.

634 304 There are no facial marks common to the Nupe people as a whole, but sub-tribes are distinguished to some extent. Many sub-tribes have to-day adopted "Bida" marks in addition to their own.

291 565 Commoners wear a loincloth, with a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder and the blue phrygian cap, said to be the traditional headgear of the Nupe. Nobles and other well-to-do men wear trousers and a flowing white robe and turban.[1]

Birth

843 The rituals surrounding childbirth begin at the time of conception and culminate in the naming ceremony. As soon as the pregnancy becomes noticeable (generally in the third to the fifth month) the parents must discontinue sexual relations and the mother must avoid places inhabited by spirits and abstain from eating certain foods which are thought to have a harmful effect on the unborn child. Special rules or avoidances may be prescribed by the diviner whom the father will consult immedi-844 ately, and again at the beginning of the confinement and before the naming ceremony. The father keeps away during the actual birth, his elder sister, mother, or other kinswoman assisting the mother, and his father or father's brother cutting the 851 umbilical cord and disposing of the afterbirth, which is buried outside the hut. Thereafter the child's paternal grandfather plays a more important part than the father, announcing the birth of his grandchild and receiving congratulations.

533 852 The naming ceremony (*suna*) usually takes place eight days after the birth. It is traditionally preceded, on the seventh day, by a libation of beer to the ancestor thought to be reborn in the child. The name used always to be announced by the child's grandfather before a group of relatives, without any particular ceremonial. To-day, however, with the spread of Islam, the announcement is usually made by a mallam. It is at this time also that the child's hair is cut and the tribal marks scratched on the cheeks and forehead.[2]

845 Twins are generally welcomed, but infants born with teeth are regarded as a bad omen.[3]

Circumcision

304 Circumcision (*zuŋ'ba*) is universal, but it does not appear to be regarded as one of the more important rituals. It is performed on boys individually between the ages of 8 and 11, whenever the father thinks fit, by a barber, who is usually paid sixpence or a shilling. Women must be away from the house when it is done, otherwise there is no ceremonial.[4]

No corresponding ceremony is reported for girls.

[1] Nadel, op cit., pp. 25, 237, 362, 405–6 (sketches of tribal marks); Meek, I, 1925, pp. 28–9; Line, 1947.
[2] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 115–18.
[3] Nadel, personal communication; Malam Aliyu Bida, Ms. Notes.
[4] Nadel, op cit., p. 116.